



press information

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Presented on PBS by



RENÉE FLEMING STARS AS *THAÏS*
ON *GREAT PERFORMANCES AT THE MET*
PRESENTED BY THIRTEEN

Thomas Hampson Co-Stars
In Tale Of Lust & Salvation

Renée Fleming is Egyptian courtesan *Thaïs* in Jules Massenet's perfumed tale of lust and salvation Saturday, March 28 at noon on *Great Performances at the Met* on PBS HD (check local listings). Joining the soprano is brilliant baritone Thomas Hampson as the tortured monk Athanaël, who falls from grace in his attempt to lead the Godless voluptuary to redemption. Presented by THIRTEEN in 5.1 surround sound, the telecast is conducted by Jesús López-Cobos and features tenor Michael Schade as Thaïs' lover, Nicias.

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"Renée Fleming owns the title role," wrote *The New York Times* when the new Met production of the 1894 work premiered last December, calling her performance "vocally sumptuous and unabashedly show-stealing." Hampson, the paper added, is "in top form," singing with "plaintive sound and sensitive lyricism."

The production, which comes from the Lyric Opera of Chicago, is by John Cox, with new costumes for Renée Fleming by renowned designer Christian Lacroix. Duane Schuler is the lighting designer; Sara Jo Slate makes her Met debut as choreographer.

Great Performances at the Met: Thaïs, the fifth of 11 productions airing this season, is

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sung in French with English surtitles; Louis Gallet wrote the libretto. It was transmitted onstage as part of *The Met: Live in HD* December 20, 2008, and recorded for this telecast. Gary Halvorson directs, with Plácido Domingo as host and Jay Saks as audio producer.

Great Performances is funded by the Irene Diamond Fund, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, public television viewers, and PBS. Corporate support for *Great Performances at the Met* is provided by Toll Brothers.

Visit **Great Performances Online** at pbs.org/gperf for additional information on this and other *Great Performances* programs.

For the Met, Mia Bongiovanni and Elena Park are Supervising Producers, and Louisa Briccetti and Victoria Warivonchik are Producers. Peter Gelb is Executive Producer. For *Great Performances*, Bill O'Donnell is Series Producer; David Horn is Executive Producer.

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About WNET.ORG

New York public media company WNET.ORG is a pioneering provider of television and web content. The parent of Thirteen, WLIW21 and Creative News Group, WNET.ORG brings such acclaimed broadcast series and websites as [Great Performances](#), [Worldfocus](#), [Nature](#), [American Masters](#), [Charlie Rose](#), [Wide Angle](#), [Secrets of the Dead](#), [Religion & Ethics Newsweekly](#), [Visions](#), [Consuelo Mack WealthTrack](#), [Wild Chronicles](#), [Miffy and Friends](#), and [Cyberchase](#) to national and international audiences. Through its wide range of channels and platforms, WNET.ORG serves the entire New York City metro area with unique local productions, broadcasts and innovative educational and cultural projects. In all that it does, WNET.ORG pursues a single, overarching goal – to create media experiences of lasting significance for New York, America and the world. For more information, visit www.wnet.org.

About the Met

Under the leadership of General Manager Peter Gelb and Music Director James Levine, the Met has a series of bold initiatives underway that are designed to broaden its audience and revitalize the company's repertory. The Met has made a commitment to presenting modern masterpieces alongside the classic repertory, with highly theatrical productions featuring the greatest opera stars in the world. Six new productions debut at the Met in 2008-09, including the company premiere of John Adams's *Doctor Atomic*.

Building on its 77-year-old international radio broadcast history – heard over the Toll Brothers-Metropolitan Opera International Radio Network – the Met now uses advanced media

distribution platforms and state-of-the-art technology to attract new audiences and reach millions of opera fans around the world. *The Met: Live in HD*, the company's Emmy-winning series of live performance transmissions, shown in high definition (HD) in movie theaters around the world, expands from eight to eleven transmissions in 2008-09 and includes distribution in New York City public schools and a number of pilot programs in schools around the country. Global distribution of the series this season reaches over 850 participating venues in North and South America, Europe, Asia, and Australia. These performances subsequently air on PBS, and a selection of these HD performances are available on DVD. Metropolitan Opera Radio on SIRIUS channel 78 and XM channel 79 is a subscription-based audio service broadcasting both live and rare historical performances. The Met recently introduced *Met Player*, a new subscription service that makes its extensive video and audio catalog of full-length performances available to the public for the first time online, and in exceptional, state-of-the-art quality. In addition to providing audio recordings through the *Met on Rhapsody* on-demand service, the company also presents free live audio streaming of performances on its website once every week during the opera season with support from RealNetworks®.

The Met has recently launched several audience development initiatives, including Open House dress rehearsals, the Arnold and Marie Schwartz Gallery Met, reduced ticket prices—including an immensely popular new rush ticket program, and an annual Holiday Series presentation for families. For more information, please visit: www.metopera.org.